

# *Questions & Answers About The Voyageurs National Park GMP/EIS*

*Q What is a general management plan/environmental impact statement?*

*A* A general management plan (GMP) identifies an overall direction for future park management and provides a framework for managers to use when making decisions about such issues as how to best protect park resources, how to provide quality visitor experiences, how to manage visitor use, and what facilities to develop in the park. The plan will not, however, include specific facility designs or guarantee funding for the park.

To comply with the National Environmental Policy Act, and National Park Service (NPS) policy, an environmental impact statement (EIS) will be prepared concurrently with the plan. The GMP/EIS will identify significant issues and concerns facing the park, present a reasonable range of management alternatives, and analyze the environmental impacts of each of the alternatives.

*Q Why does Voyageurs National Park need a GMP?*

*A* The National Parks and Recreation Act of 1978 (P.L.95-625) requires the preparation and timely revision of general management plans for each unit of the national park system. Voyageurs National Park's existing master plan was completed in 1980. It is now outdated and does not address many current changes. Among the significant changes over the past 18 years are: increases in the number of visitors, changes in visitor use patterns and expectations, and new knowledge and understanding of park resources and systems.

*Q What is the visitor use and facilities plan and how does it relate to the GMP?*

*A* Public Law 97-105 called for the development of a visitor use and facilities plan. This plan "...shall set forth methods of achieving an appropriate level and type of visitation in order that the resources of the park and its environs may be interpreted for, and used and enjoyed by, the public in a manner consistent with the purposes for which the park was established." This plan has not been funded by Congress and consequently the plan has not yet been completed. So the visitor use and facilities plan will be incorporated into the GMP as a distinct section. The planning team will work with a group of local, state, and federal agencies and recreation professionals in developing this section of the GMP.

*Q Are there any topics and issues that will not be considered by the GMP?*

*A* Yes. Several topics and issues are beyond the scope of the GMP. They are not being addressed because decisions have already been made and/or action is already being taken, international jurisdiction is involved, or congressional



legislation and NPS policy constrains what can be considered in the plan. The following topics and issues will *not* be addressed in the plan:

- wilderness proposals (The court-directed 1993 wilderness recommendation is currently in the office of the Secretary of the Interior, awaiting action.)
- the National Park Service's authority to regulate water-based activities in the park (This is a legal issue, which is currently pending before the federal district court.)
- water levels in the park's major lakes (This is an international issue, under the control of the International Joint Commission.)
- modifications to the park's boundary (No major changes have been identified as being needed.)
- life estates and use and occupancy leases (Decisions have already been made on the estates and leases, and action is proceeding under the 1998 *Land Protection Plan*.)
- hunting, trapping, logging, mining, and the use of all-terrain vehicles (These uses are prohibited under federal law or NPS policy in most units of the national park system, including Voyageurs National Park.)
- banning the use of houseboats, motorboats, aircraft, or snowmobiles (The general management plan will not ban the general use of houseboats, motorboats, aircraft, or snowmobiles in the park. These are traditional, legitimate uses of the park, which are consistent with the purposes and significance of Voyageurs. However, their use may be limited in parts of the park if necessary to protect park resources and visitor experiences.)

### *Q Who is writing the GMP/EIS?*

*A* A planning team has been established to complete the GMP/EIS. The team consists of the park superintendent, her staff, technical specialists from the National Park Service's planning and design office in Denver, and staff from the NPS Midwest Regional Office in Omaha.

### *Q What or who else is influencing the development of the GMP?*

*A* Several elements will affect the development of the plan. The park's mission, purposes, and significance form the foundation and boundaries for the plan. Other laws and NPS policies constrain what can and cannot occur in Voyageurs National Park. Public input will play a key role in shaping alternative management approaches that are considered in the plan. A consultation group will be working with the planning team in developing the visitor use and facilities section of the GMP.

### *Q Who will approve the GMP/EIS?*

*A* The National Park Service's Midwest Regional Director will approve the final GMP/EIS for Voyageurs National Park.

